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ABSTRACT

The prevocational program at the School for Contemporary Education (SCE), Springfield, Virginia, for severely handicapped students (4 to 18 years old) aims at mastery of annual work adjustment objectives by the students and involves development of evaluation procedures, development and implementation of vocational modules for work adjustment instruction, and setting vocational objectives for each student's individualized education plan (IEP). The program is based on a K through 12 concept with a six stage vocational development process: identifying with a worker (career awareness), acquiring the basic habits of industry (career exploration), acquiring identity as a worker in the occupational structure (preoccupational), becoming a productive person, maintaining a productive society, and contemplating a productive and responsible life. Among program objectives is to provide each student with entry level vocational skills necessary for advancement to more specific vocational opportunities either in the community or in a sheltered environment. The work adjustment training element provies opportunities to learn skills of a general nature which are directly related to employment. Placements in community or sheltered environments are evaluated at 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year after initial placement through the vocational followup services. (SBH)

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THE SCE PRE-VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

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"General education for work should probably be aimed at enhancing the young person's reading comprehension, arithmetical skills, the ability to write and speak clearly, and the capacity for working closely with other people. We seem to have forgotten that these skills are the ones most sought after by employers."

Work in America, 1973

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THE PRE-VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

Introduction

The pre-vocational program at the School for Contemporary Education (SCE) began during the summer of 1978. Part of this program was funded by a Title I grant from the District of Columbia Public Schools. This grant provided a start of the pre-vocational program for the students attending the School for Contemporary Education. Specific instruction in some of the behaviors universally required on jobs is the content of the pre-vocational concept; such instruction is deemed essential for the severely handicapped SCE pupils before they can succeed at content-specific vocational training or tasks either in school, in the community or in a sheltered work environment.

This program, aimed at mastery of annual work adjustment objectives by the students, involves development of evaluation procedures, development and implementation of vocational modules for work adjustment instruction, and setting vocational objectives for each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Rationale

Usually everyone will be involved in some kind of work during their lifetime. It was not too many years ago that boys learned a trade from their fathers while girls learned homemaking from their mothers. Today in our modern, technological society, students learn about work via a very different process. The first formal introduction to the "world of work" is usually provided in school. Educators for years have been providing students with information about careers and also actual "hands-on" work experiences.

The students at SCE, just like everyone else, are in need of some type of pre-vocational experiences which include career information and work-experience. Most of these students will at some time in the future be involved in earning a living. Therefore, it becomes the function of the SCE pre-vocational program to provide meaningful work-oriented experiences for all students.

Vocational Development at SCE

Vocational development at SCE is the term used to describe the total K-12 concept for providing career awareness, exploratory and pre-occupational experiences. Vocational development, as defined by Havinghurst (1964), has six stages through which individuals pass. These stages are outlined below:

Stages of Vocational Development	Approximate Mental Ages
I. Identifying with a Worker (Career Awareness) This is father, mother, and/or other significant persons. The concept of working becomes an essential part of the child's ego ideal.	5 - 10
II. Acquiring the Basic Habits of Industry (Career Exploration) Child learns to organize his time and energy to finish a work task such as school work or chores. He is learning to put work ahead of play in appropriate situations.	10 - 15
III. Acquiring Identity as a Worker in the Occupational Structure (Pre-Occupational) The individual is choosing and preparing for an occupation. His work experience becomes a basis for occupational choice and for assurance of economic independence.	15 - 25
IV. Becoming a Productive Person The individual masters his occupational skills. He moves up the ladder within his occupation.	25 - 40
V. Maintaining a Productive Society Emphasis shifts toward the societal and away from the individual aspect of the worker's role. The individual sees himself as a responsible citizen in a productive society.	40 - 70
VI. Contemplating a Productive and Responsible Life The person is retired from his work or in process of withdrawing from the worker's role. He looks back over his work life with satisfaction, sees that he has made his social contribution, and is pleased with it.	70+

The pre-vocational program at SCE is based on the first three stages. Stage I is primarily for the students who exhibit extreme behavioral problems and very impoverished adaptive skills. This stage provides students with career awareness where the concept of self and working becomes a part of the child's knowledge. Stages II and III are more concerned with the older students who also exhibit extreme behavioral problems but function at a much higher intellectual, academic and social level. These stages provide students with career exploration and pre-occupational experiences. Career exploration activities provide the students with opportunities to sample and engage in experiences related to the "world of work". The pre-occupational activities provide students with simulated or actual "hands-on" experiences of an occupational nature for the development of basic entry-level vocational skills.

Students must progress through each stage before entering the next stage. Since the skipping of any stage will make it almost impossible to complete another stage successfully, all SCE students are required to demonstrate pre-determined behavioral skills before proceeding to the next stage of development.

Program Goal

To provide a pre-vocational program for all SCE students that will meet their individual needs.

Statement of Need

The students at SCE range in age from 4 to 18 years of age, equally distributed between pre-adolescents and adolescents. Academically, performance levels vary from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade.

All the pupils exhibit behavioral problems of an extreme nature. Approximately half of the group have a very impoverished repertoire of adaptive skills. These pupils appear cognitively impaired, exhibiting stereotypical and bizarre reations to environment. The other half of the group function on relatively higher intellectual, academic, and social levels. However, they exhibit any number of deviant and generally socially unacceptable behaviors including the following: unpredictable and erratic behavior, difficulty in accepting consequences of inappropriate behavior, impulsivity, constant resistance to authority, and aggressive and/or destructive conduct.

SCE has always provided a program designed to increase the adaptive academic and social behavior of all these pupils. It has become increasingly clear, however, that for these individuals to lead any type of independent adult life, instruction in academic and social skills is not sufficient.

In order to be able to become independent and productive adult employees, these pupils must be taught entry-level vocational skills which are pre-requisites to any work situation. Such instruction will be necessary for all these pupils before any training in specific lifetime vocational skills can be relevant.

The objective of this program is to set up experiences so that the students will master annual entry-level vocational skills. The definition of entry-level vocational skills that is being used in this context refers to those skills that are judged to be necessary to successful adaptation of any job as apart from those skills that are specific to a particular job or occupation. Examples of entry-level vocational skills would be punctuality, following directions, and working independently. Obviously, students will be involved in the pre-vocational program to varying degrees depending upon their ages and needs. However, given the severity of the students handicapping conditions and their slow learning rates, even a young child should be instructed on some work related activities.

Program Objectives

1. To assess each student's entry-level vocational needs and write vocational objectives for the Individual Education Plans (IEP's).

2. To develop a pre-vocational program to meet the entry-level needs of the total SCE school population.

3. To provide each student with the entry-level vocational skills necessary for advancement to more specific vocational opportunities either in the community or in a sheltered environment.

4. To evaluate each student's progress in meeting 80% of the IEP's vocational objectives and modify this plan as necessary in order to meet the entry-level vocational skills by each student.

Vocational Assessment

Each student at SCE will have a vocational assessment completed before entering the pre-vocational program. Vocational assessment at SCE is defined as a process that assists a student (and/or his parents and staff) in the formulation of a plan for training that will result in the student acquiring basic entry-level vocational skills. The vocational assessment is done on an individual basis taking into account as much information as possible on the student including information from the teachers, other staff members and parents.

There is a close relationship between performance in a simulated work environment and on-the-job. Therefore, information on a student's work habits in the classroom and on work related activities outside the classroom will be collected. This information will be used for assessment of a student's potential work personality and behavior for the planned pre-vocational activities. From this vocational assessment information, behavioral objectives are written for each student and the type of pre-vocational program is selected. These behavioral objectives then become part of the student's Individual Education Program (IEP).

The Pre-vocational Program and Work Adjustment

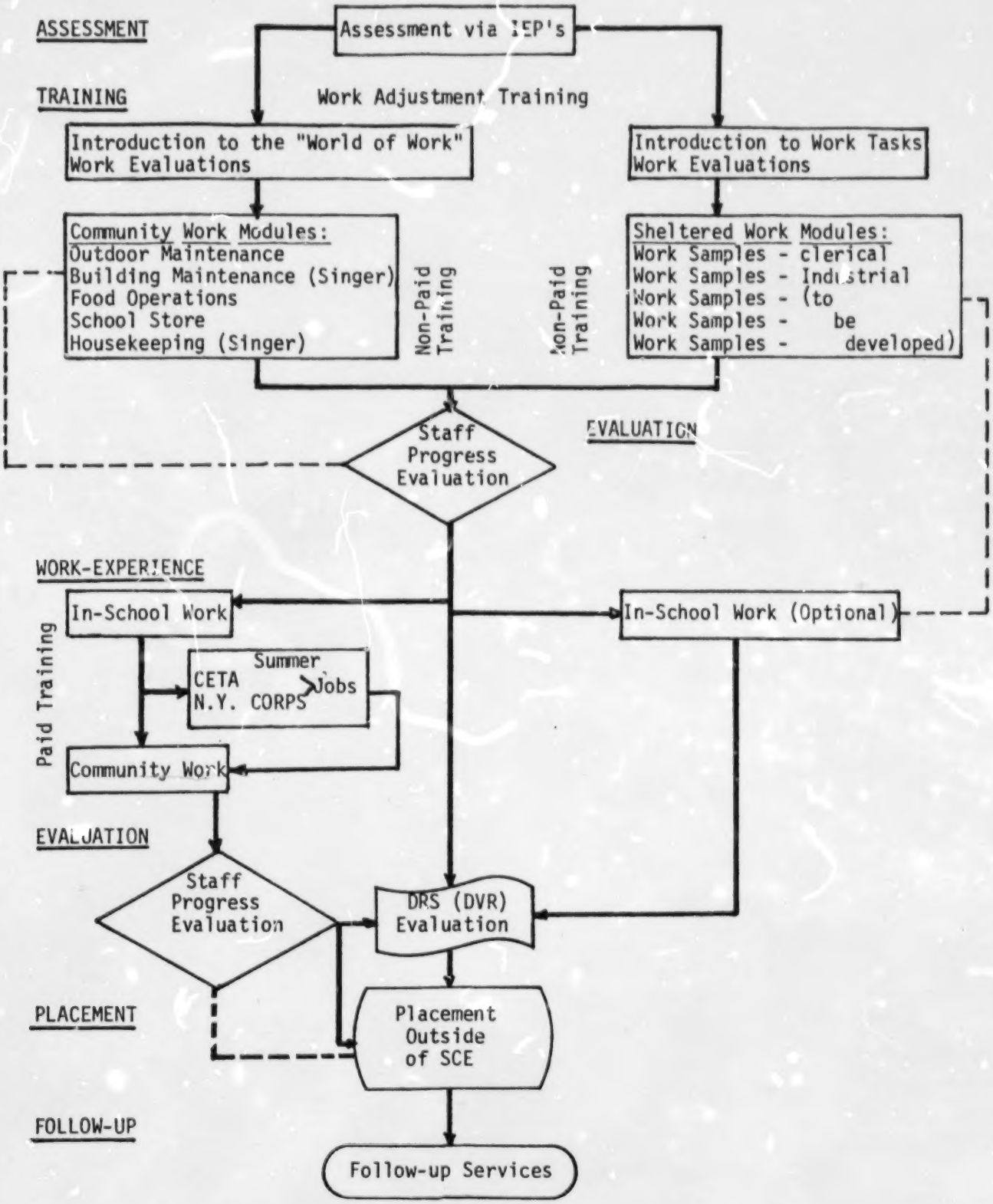
The pre-vocational program at SCE is a series of events that prepares students for employment in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. This program differs from the traditional vocational education program that prepares individuals for a lifetime specialty. The pre-vocational program has the realistic recognition of educating individuals who may be changing employment and therefore provides more general experiences for the "world of work" (Viggiani, 1971).

The heart of the pre-vocational program is work adjustment training. This element of the pre-vocational program provides structured, controlled work training by which a student's environment is altered so that appropriate work behaviors are learned and maintained and inappropriate behaviors are eliminated. Work adjustment training is divided into two sections, preparation for community employment and preparation for sheltered employment. The community employment section is designed for SCE students who function at a much higher intellectual, academic, and social level. This section has as its main objective to provide students with the basic entry-level vocational skills necessary for advancement to more specific vocational opportunities. An example of these vocational opportunities would be a job in a local business or further skill training at a vocational school.

The sheltered employment section is designed for SCE students with very limited adaptive skills. This section has as its main objective to prepare students for some type of work in a sheltered environment such as a rehabilitation workshop, activity center or state facility.

The work adjustment training element of the pre-vocational program provides opportunities for students to learn annual entry-level vocational skills. These skills are of a general nature and are directly related to employment in a community or sheltered environment. Work adjustment training is <u>not</u> designed to train students for a specific occupational area or job. For example, some work adjustment behaviors for the community employment section are:

THE PRE-VOCATIONAL PROGRAM



1. Filling out job applications.
2. Being on time for work.
3. Learning to follow directions.
4. Working independently.

Examples of work adjustment behaviors for a sheltered employment environment are:

1. Being able to communicate basic needs.
2. Being able to move safely about the work area.
3. Maintaining proper grooming.
4. Learning to complete repetitive tasks.

The sheltered environment is very different from the usual business work world. This environment is not competitive and usually not self supporting like most businesses in the community. The administrative and supervisory personnel in a sheltered work environment are clinically trained, and are service, rather than profit oriented.

When a student's vocational assessment is completed he is selected for either the community or sheltered environment work adjustment training. Then, focusing on the student's vocational needs, individual behavioral objectives are written into the IEP's. The student then enters one of the work adjustment sections as outlined on the preceeding page. All students will follow one of the outlines as shown on the preceeding page. For the community work and sheltered work adjustment training, students will be required to take both the introductory and work sample evaluation modules. Upon completion of these, the students start the non-paid training modules. For community work, students must complete a minimum of three of the five non-paid training modules offered before they are considered for paid training work. For the sheltered work adjustment training, students will complete a minimum of four out of the five non-paid training modules. Upon meeting these standards, progress evaluations will be made by the SCE staff. These evaluations will usually result in advancement to in-school paid training or some type of sheltered environment outside of SCE. However, due to age and ability, some students will need additional experiences and they will be returned to the non-paid training modules for more training.

These first evaluations, done by the SCE staff, will assess the student's progress toward meeting the entry-level vocational objectives from the IEP's. These evaluations may involve changes in a student's work adjustment schedule based on the student's behavior and progress. The staff will use the following placeability scale developed by Campbell, Todd and O'Rourke (1976) in determining the current level of student functioning:

1. Nonproductive. Needs clinical or custodial care in day-care center or hospital. Not capable of any significant production because of profound emotional, mental, or physical impairments. Requires close professional supervision or care.

2. Marginally productive (Sheltered workshop). Needs work-activity program in which production demands are light or absent. Capable of only minimal production even in a sheltered situation because of severe emotional, mental, or physical impairments.

3. Placeable at sheltered level only (example: interschool placement). Can produce quite satisfactorily on most sheltered-workshop tasks but needs special understanding, acceptance, and guidance because of marked emotional, mental, or physical deficiencies. Also, special jigs or adaptive work tools may be required.

4. Potentially placeable (community volunteer training stations). Some aspects of work habits, attitudes, job performance, or social behavior unacceptable now but can be improved with training and counseling. Emotional, mental or physical deficiencies are modifiable, are minimal, or do not create serious barriers to employer acceptance.

5. Ready for placement (competitive employment). Work habits, attitudes, job performance, and social behavior are acceptable. With minimum placement and follow-up services, could achieve and maintain competitive status at comparable skill levels in the community.

Upon completion of these evaluations, a decision will be made to continue, revise, hold or terminate the pre-vocational program for the student. For the sheltered work adjustment section, recommendations for termination will result in either a second evaluation by the Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), a trial in-school work module or a placement outside of SCE. DRS provides a total vocational evaluation of individuals having work potential to determine their eligibility for funds for further vocational training.

For the community work adjustment section, recommendations to continue will result in paid work either in-school or in the local community. Upon successful completion of these two modules, a second evaluation will be completed by the SCE staff. This second evaluation will determine whether a student should be placed in a terminal job with or without the services of DRS. Some of these students may also participate in summer employment programs like CETA which will provide additional out-of-school work experience.

Placement and Follow-up

The terminal goal of the pre-vocational program is to provide SCE students with vocational skills necessary for advancement to more specific vocational opportunities either in the community or in a sheltered environment. When a student can no longer benefit from the work adjustment training, he will receive final placement outside of SCE. This placement will then be evaluated at one month, three months, six months and finally at one year after initial placement through the vocational follow-up services. These follow-up services will provide SCE with feedback on how successful students are after they leave the pre-vocational program. Other types of accountability measures including staff, parent and community evaluations will be used to evaluate the pre-vocational program at SCE.

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